

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMCONSUL DOUALA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LAGOS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 062087

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP, PFOR, EK

SUBJECT: PRESS STATEMENT ON SUSPENSION OF DIPLOMATIC
RELATIONS WITH EQUATORIAL GUINEA

REF: STATE 62081

1. ADDRESSEE POSTS ARE INSTRUCTED TO INFORM HOST GOVERN-
MENTS OF UNITED STATES DECISION TO SUSPEND DIPLOMATIC
RELATIONS WITH EQUATORIAL GUINEA.

2. FOLLOWING STATEMENT EXPLAINING USG DECISION TO
SUSPEND DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH EQUATORIAL GUINEA WILL
BE RELEASED IN WASHINGTON MONDAY MARCH 15.

QUOTE: ON MARCH 10, 1976, THE DEPARTMENT RECEIVED A
TELEGRAM FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF EQUATORIAL GUINEA,
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INFORMING US THAT HIS GOVERNMENT HAD DECLARED TWO

AMERICAN DIPLOMATS PERSONAE NON GRATAE. THE TWO OFFICERS ARE U.S. AMBASSADOR HERBERT J. SPIRO AND U.S. CONSUL WILLIAM C. MITHOEFER, JR., WHO ARE BOTH RESIDENT IN THE NEARBY COUNTRY OF CAMEROON, BUT ARE ALSO ACCREDITED TO EQUATORIAL GUINEA.

THIS ACTION ON THE PART OF THE EQUATORIAL GUINEAN GOVERNMENT CAME WITHOUT ANY OFFICIAL WARNING WHATSOEVER, AND WITHOUT ANY EXPLANATION OFFERED. WE CONSIDER IT AN UNWARRANTED AFFRONT NOT ONLY TO THE TWO INDIVIDUALS CONCERNED, WHO IN THEIR BRIEF VISITS TO EQUATORIAL GUINEA HAVE WORKED IN GOOD FAITH TO PROMOTE FRIENDLY RELATIONS, BUT ALSO TO THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT, AND TO THE ACCEPTED NORMS OF INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY. THERE HAD NEVER BEEN ANY PREVIOUS INDICATION, DIRECT OR INDIRECT, FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF EQUATORIAL GUINEA THAT IT WAS DISSATISFIED WITH THE ACTIVITIES OF THE U.S. REPRESENTATIVES. ON THE CONTRARY, THESE VISITS HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT WITH THE CONCURRENCE AND COOPERATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF EQUATORIAL GUINEA.

WITH SOME REGRET, WE HAVE DECIDED THAT WE HAVE NO REASONABLE ALTERNATIVE BUT TO SUSPEND DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH EQUATORIAL GUINEA, AND WE ARE SO INFORMING THE EQUATORIAL GUINEAN GOVERNMENT. UNQUOTE

3. FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ARE DEPARTMENT PREPARED PRESS GUIDANCE:

QUOTE:

Q: WHAT WERE THE EVENTS, IF ANY, THAT LED UP TO THIS ACTION ON THE PART OF EQUATORIAL GUINEA?

A: AMBASSADOR SPIRO AND MR. MITHOEFER VISITED EQUATORIAL GUINEA'S MAINLAND PROVINCE OF RIO MUNI BETWEEN MARCH 4 AND 9. THE TRIP WAS MADE AT THE SUGGESTION OF EQUATORIAL GUINEA'S PRESIDENT, WHO GAVE THE TWO OFFICERS A WARM RECEPTION AND ASSIGNED HIS ACTING CHIEF OF PROTOCOL TO ACCOMPANY THEM FOR THE DURATION OF THEIR VISIT. UPON THEIR DEPARTURE, THE ACTING CHIEF OF PROTOCOL, SUPPOSEDLY CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTING ON HIS OWN INITIATIVE AND NOT UNDER INSTRUCTIONS BY HIS GOVERNMENT, HANDED AMBASSADOR SPIRO A BIZARRELY-WORDED, FIVE-PAGE LETTER CASTING UNWARRANTED AND INSULTING SLURS ON THE AMBASSADOR, CONSUL MITHOEFER, AND THE U.S. GOVERNMENT GENERALLY.

SINCE THIS INCIDENT ONLY SHORTLY PRECEDED OUR RECEIPT OF THE TELEGRAM DECLARING BOTH OFFICERS PERSONA NON GRATA,

WE CAN SPECULATE THAT THERE MAY HAVE BEEN SOME CONNECTION;
BUT WE HAVE RECEIVED NO FURTHER CLARIFICATION FROM THE
EQUATORIAL GUINEAN GOVERNMENT.

Q: YOU SAID THAT THE TWO OFFICERS ARE RESIDENT NOT IN
EQUATORIAL GUINEA BUT IN CAMEROON. HOW OFTEN HAVE THEY
VISITED EQUATORIAL GUINEA?

A: IN HIS CAPACITY AS U.S. CONSUL IN DOUALA, MR. MITHOE-
FER VISITS EQUATORIAL GUINEA PERIODICALLY, PERHAPS FOUR
TIMES PER YEAR. PRIOR TO THE MOST RECENT VISIT,
AMBASSADOR SPIRO HAD BEEN TO EQUATORIAL GUINEA ONLY ONCE,
BRIEFLY, UPON PRESENTATION OF HIS CREDENTIALS LAST
DECEMBER.

Q: WHAT IS THE GENERAL STATE OF U.S. RELATIONS WITH
EQUATORIAL GUINEA?

A: UP TO NOW, OUR RELATIONS HAVE BEEN GENERALLY CORRECT
IN TONE, WITHOUT BEING PARTICULARLY CLOSE. WE HAVE
FEW ECONOMIC INTERESTS IN COMMON. POLITICALLY, OUR
VIEWS HAVE DIVERGED CONSIDERABLY, ESPECIALLY IN THE U.N.
AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL FORUMS.

Q: DIDN'T THE UNITED STATES MAINTAIN A MISSION IN
EQUATORIAL GUINEA AT ONE TIME?

A: YES, WE MAINTAINED A TWO-MAN CONSULATE IN THE
CAPITAL CITY FOR A FEW YEARS, BUT CLOSED IT DOWN IN
1971 BECAUSE THE VOLUME OF WORK PERFORMED DID NOT
JUSTIFY THE EXPENSE OF A SEPARATE MISSION.

Q: WAS THERE NOT AN INCIDENT IN 1971 IN WHICH AN
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AMERICAN MEMBER OF THE CONSULATE STAFF MURDERED HIS
ASSISTANT?

A: THE CONSULATE'S ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER, AN
AMERICAN, WAS MURDERED IN 1971. THE PRINCIPAL OFFICER,
ALSO AN AMERICAN, WAS LATER CONVICTED OF THE CRIME.
THIS TRAGEDY WAS CERTAINLY A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR IN OUR
DECISION TO CLOSE THE CONSULATE, BUT WAS NOT THE PRIME
FACTOR. UNQUOTE. KISSINGER

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